



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Substance Abuse and Mental
Health Services Administration

Center for Mental Health Services
Center for Substance Abuse
Prevention
Center for Substance Abuse
Treatment
Rockville MD 20857

AUG 11 2009

Brother Pope Simmons
Chairman of the Board
Kristin Brooks Hope Center
1250 24th St NW
Washington, DC 20037

Dear Brother Simmons:

Secretary Sebelius has asked me to thank you for your letter of July 23 and to respond to you directly regarding 1-800-Suicide.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) became involved in this public health and safety matter by preventing the imminent disconnection of 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433) and the other toll free suicide prevention hotline numbers in August 2006. Since that time, SAMHSA has focused on a single goal, consistent with SAMHSA's mission and authority: to assure that individuals in crisis and at risk for suicide will have their calls answered by staff of trained crisis centers when the number 1-800-SUICIDE is dialed. Recent figures show that approximately 1,000 people dial the number 1-800-SUICIDE on a daily basis.

Following the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) issuance of an order in January 2007 reassigning three toll free suicide hotlines to SAMHSA on a temporary basis, SAMHSA has been able to stabilize this critical, life-saving service through the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (the Lifeline). It remains SAMHSA's goal to secure access and availability of the hotlines that serve as callers' links to crisis centers that connect to local emergency, mental health, and social service resources through the Lifeline. As part of SAMHSA's authority as a public health agency, it funds and administers grant programs for which qualified organizations can compete in an open process. The Lifeline, which currently includes 1-800-SUICIDE as part of its network, is operated according to the terms of a cooperative agreement for Networking, Certifying, and Training Suicide Prevention Hotlines following an open and public competition in 2007 in which the Kristin Brooks Hope Center (KBHC) chose not to take part. At the end of the term of the current grant there will be another competition, and KBHC is welcome to compete.

SAMHSA's position and response in this are a matter of public record which is found in the numerous filings on the FCC docket. We have considered the settlement you proposed in your letter to the Secretary. Unfortunately, the arrangements you outline are not consistent with our award process and do not, in our view, safeguard the interests of those in need of suicide prevention assistance and the broader concern for public health. Beyond that, we do not think it would be productive to address the other assertions raised in your letter.

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SAMHSA's mission is to build resilience and facilitate recovery for people with or at risk for mental or substance use disorders. As part of that mission, SAMHSA is committed to strengthening the national suicide prevention safety net, and its request to the FCC for permanent reassignment of the toll free suicide prevention hotline numbers is in support of that outcome.

We are grateful for the Kristin Brooks Hope Center's continued interest in, and commitment to, suicide prevention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Eric B. Broderick". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Eric B. Broderick, D.D.S., M.P.H.
Acting Administrator
Assistant Surgeon General

Cc: FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski
FCC Commissioner Copps
FCC Commissioner McDowell
Julie Veach, Acting Chief, FCC Wireline Competition Bureau
The Honorable Eric Shinseki, Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs
Ms. Rina Hakimian, Counsel for SAMHSA